

## B. Claims

Please amend claims 1 and 22 as follows. A complete listing of all the claims appears below; this listing replaces all earlier amendments and listings of the claims.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing an alcohol-free liquid composition of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester comprising the steps of:

(a) providing an alcohol-free liquid carrier consisting of water and a suspending agent selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, algin, gum arabic, carrageenan, xanthan gum, guar gum, tragacanth, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, methylcellulose, pectin, locust bean gum, sodium alginate, propylene glycol alginate, caramel and mixtures thereof; and

(b) mixing N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester with said alcohol-free liquid carrier, said alcohol-free liquid carrier consisting of water and a suspending agent selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, algin, gum arabic, carrageenan, xanthan gum, guar gum, tragacanth, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, methylcellulose, pectin, locust bean gum, sodium alginate, propylene glycol alginate, caramel and mixtures thereof, in a ratio of up to 3:2 to produce an alcohol-free liquid composition;

wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed until fully dissolved or suspended.

2. - 9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the suspending agent is selected from the group consisting carboxymethyl cellulose, carrageenan, xanthan gum or tragacanth.

11. - 13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the suspending agent may be effectively incorporated in the liquid composition in amounts of from 0.001% to about 0.5% of the total weight of the composition.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 1% to 70% by weight of the liquid composition.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 20% to 55% by weight of the liquid composition.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 20% to 35% by weight of the liquid composition.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed with said liquid carrier at a temperature in the range of about -20°C to about 30°C.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed with said liquid carrier at a temperature in the range of about -10°C to about 10°C.

20. (Original) The liquid composition produced according to the method of claim 1.

21. (Original) A food or beverage product sweetened by the composition of claim 20.

22. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing an alcohol-free liquid composition of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester comprising the step of:

mixing 30% by weight of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester with an alcohol-free liquid carrier consisting of water;

wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- $\alpha$ -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed until fully dissolved or suspended.